IN THE CLAIMS:

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with underlining and deleted text with ~~strikethrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

Please ADD claim 25 in accordance with the following:

1-13. (CANCELLED)

14. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A server connected with a plurality of multifunction machines via a network, the server comprising:

a plurality of request processing units that process requests received from at least one of the multifunction machines;

an assigning unit that assigns the request processing unit to the multifunction machine based on the request, and sends a completion-of-assignment notification to the multifunction machine, the completion-of-assignment notification indicating that processing of the request is possible;

an assignment canceling unit that cancels the assignment of the request processing unit to the multifunction machine when the request is not received within a predetermined amount of time; and

an information recorder that has multifunction connection information, the multifunction connection information having information indicative of whether the multifunction machine is in an operable state in linkage with the server, wherein the request is received based on the multifunction connection information.

15. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The server according to claim 14, wherein the completion-of-assignment notification has information of a function, and the function is processable by the server.

16. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The server according to claim 14, the server further comprising:

a fax that faxes image data;

wherein the request processing unit controls the fax and sends the image data received from the multifunction machine when the request processing unit receives the request to fax from the multifunction machine.

17. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The server according to claim 14, further comprising:
a recorder that records image data;
wherein the request processing unit records the image data received from the multifunction machine on the recorder when the request processing unit receives the request from the multifunction machine to record the image data.

18. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The server according claim 14, further comprising:
a utilizing situation recorder that records utilizing situation information received from the plurality of multifunction machines, the utilizing situation information being information how often each of the multifunction machines is used; and
a utilizing situation information transmitter that transmits, when any one of nodes makes a request for transmitting the utilizing situation information, the utilizing situation information back to said node having transmitted a transmission request.

19. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The server according to claim 18, wherein the utilizing situation information transmitter transmits the utilizing situation information to the node in accordance with a predetermined schedule.

20. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The server according to claim 18, the server further comprising:
a destruction detecting unit that detects a destruction of the information recorded on the utilizing situation recorder;
a utilizing situation information managing unit that requests each of the multifunction machines to transmit the utilizing situation information when the destruction detecting unit detects the destruction, and again records the transmitted utilizing situation information on the utilizing situation recorder.

21. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A storage medium readable by a computer, the storage medium storing a program of instructions executable by the computer to perform a

function as a server, the function comprising:

processing requests by at least one of the request processing units, the request being received from at least one of the multifunction machines;

assigning the request processing unit to the multifunction machine based on the request, and sending a completion-of-assignment notification to the multifunction machine, the completion-of-assignment notification indicating that processing of the request is possible; and

canceling the assignment of the request processing unit to the multifunction machine when the request is not received within a predetermined amount of time, and

recording and having multifunction connection information, the multifunction connection information indicating whether the multifunction machine is in an operable state in linkage with the server,

wherein the request is received based on the multifunction connection information.

22.   (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A method of executing multiple functions using multifunction apparatuses connected to each other via a network, comprising:

assigning a processing request to a usable multifunction apparatus among the multifunction apparatuses based on operation content of the request and transmitting a notification indicative of the assignment to the usable multifunction apparatus; and

executing a function via the usable multifunction apparatus in accordance with the assigned request.

23.   (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The server according to claim 14, wherein the server has information of each of the multifunction machines, and the information has at least one of a status of the multifunction machine, a type of executable job, an address on the network, user information and a type of connection.

24.   (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A server connected with a plurality of multifunction machines via a network, the server comprising:

a plurality of request processing units that process a request received from at least one of the multifunction machines;

an assigning unit that assigns at least one of the request processing units to the multifunction machine based on the request, and sends a completion-of-assignment notification to the multifunction machine, the completion-of-assignment indicating that processing of the request is possible; and

an assignment canceling unit that cancels the assignment of the request processing unit to the multifunction machine when the request is not received within a predetermined amount of time,

wherein the server has at least one of option information, multifunction machine connection information, non-self system linkage information, and intra self-system registration address information, the option information is information of a function executable by the server, the multifunction machine, the non-self system linkage information is used when the server accessed another system, the intro self-system registration address information is used when the server accesses intra self-system.

25.   (NEW) A method of assigning a request to multifunction apparatuses, comprising:

receiving a request having a content indicative of a function to be executed and determining usability of the multifunction apparatuses to execute the function based on analysis of the received request; and

assigning the request to an available multifunction apparatus among the multifunction apparatuses based on the analysis of the request and providing a notification indicative of the assignment.